

TO: Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee

FROM: Shirley Girouard, RN, PhD, FAAN
Member, State Innovations Model (SIM)
Practice Transformation Task Force

DATE: March 7, 2016

RE: SB 361 An Act Revising the State Code of Ethics

As a member of the SIM, Practice Transformation Task Force, I would like to express my support for SB361 to close (what I am sure) was an oversight in the State Code of Ethics for Public Officials that exempts appointees of the Lieutenant Governor from the this this level of ethical transparency. This bill makes State Innovation Model (SIM) and similar future state governing bodies subject to the same ethical code as other state agencies. Rationale for my support includes the following:

- SIM is an initiative of the administration, with all committee members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor or her appointees
- This is a new state agency
- Funded by a \$45 million federal grant
- SIM makes grants to health systems, practices and consultants
- SIM has expansive authority, far more than most state councils and taskforces
- SIM and its committees are setting standards and payment for health care that will affect at least 80% of Connecticut residents within the next five years.

As I am sure you are aware, the State Code of Ethics was established in 1977 and has been updated regularly to ensure that state government, gets the best input from all stakeholders, while ensuring that taxpayers and consumers are protected from conflicted interests. As there is some suggestion that issues have already occurred given the weaker conflict of interest statement SIM members were asked to sign, the need is clear.

Late last year, members of SIM committees were told they must sign a weak Conflict of Interest Policy asserting, among other things, that even if SIM were subject to the Code of Ethics, that SIM committees are purely advisory and would not be affected. We were informed that if we did not sign the weak SIM policy, we would be removed from all SIM committees. Many of us disagreed with that statement and noted that we are not in a position to make that determination – that is the role of the Office of State Ethics and their Board. Given our concerns, eight of us (independent advocates) signed an alternative policy including the weaker language and further agreeing to comply with the State Code of Ethics and stating that we were signing to be able to continue our independent representation of consumers on SIM committees

Thank you for your attention to this most important issue. I urge you, on behalf of all Connecticut residents, to support this bill and thus assure transparency and adherence to ethical standards for all appointed to service.